



Prefab: Healthcare

The First Room

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weekly meetings on Tuesday ● 09:00-14:00 ● Hybrid
mode in teams of 2 ● course held in German and
English ● registration with portfolio via TISS

Online introduction 05.10.2020 12.00 - 15.00 ● excursion
to site in Vienna 16.30 - 18.00

In the age of constant change, time is a crucial aspect in regard to construction. Historical and contemporary incidents (ranging from insufficient housing and lack of resources to social, environmental and pandemic catastrophes) have always been driving forces for the development of the prefabrication industry and technology. 'Prefab', as the umbrella term for this design studio series, defines the constructive focus. By understanding fundamental characteristics of different prefabrication technologies (cross-laminated timber, concrete, rammed earth), design proposals will be developed for three sites in Vienna, Hütteldorf – each with a distinct programme: education, healthcare and production.

The analysis of programmatically specific prefab references will foster the understanding and structural poetry of the respective prefab technologies, preparing the basis for the design experimentation to develop a typology. The initial research will be expanded through international experts and excursions to factories in Austria. Set in a cultural, social and ecological context, these prefab-induced typologies will offer the possibility to react to future requirements and developments.

The First Room

The process of our birth represents one of the most sensitive moments of our existence – it is a transition, a separation and a first contact with a new world. Up to now, the event of the birth is embedded in the cultural identity of each society.

The place, the ambient and the atmosphere into which one is born is influencing the nervous system and brain of the newborn child – these stimuli do have a different effect on the fully developed system of the mother.

Rooms that offer privacy, views into nature, plenty of light and a natural atmosphere, substantially support the process of the birth. In our culture there are no rooms or buildings that are specifically designed for giving birth. For centuries, births took place in the everyday home environment. Eventually, the giving birth moved slowly out of the cultural context into a more and more medical context and presently 99% of the children in Austria are born in a delivery room in a hospital. The medical care of these births is in the fore. The application of natural materials is often set aside with the argument of hygienic standards - in this field, reforms seem to make sense. New perspectives in healthcare architecture and healthcare programs, like detaching partially specific areas from the hospital complex, could be advantageous on various levels: relaxed regulations for birthing centers would reduce the building requirements, these buildings could relieve the hospitals economically, additional capacities could be generated and in the case of pandemics, the birthing center would function as its own entity. Prefabrication enable short construction times and largely decoupling building phases which can also be carried out during continuous operation.

What are architectural requirements for a building, a birthing center to offer an appropriate environment for a birth on all levels?

With the support of the curators of the exhibition 'Birth Culture' in the women's museum Hittisau, the topic is approached by presentations and discussions. The hospital St. Josef in Hütteldorf offers an ideal location and setting for the program of the design. Attached to the hospital but nevertheless independent, a birthing center can be developed that has prescribed itself to create the best possible environment for a good start into life.

¹ from: „Flying Panels - How Concret Panels Changed the World“, exhibition at ArkDes, Stockholm, curated by Pedro Ignacio Alonso und Hugo Palmarola, 2019